



SHIRLEY CHISHOLM
Member of Congress
12th District, New York

Shirley Chisholm is the senior Democratic Congresswoman in the United States House of Representatives. She is the only woman -- and the only Black American -- to sit on the powerful House Rules Committee. In addition, Mrs. Chisholm is Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus and Vice Chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus. Her biweekly meetings with President Jimmy Carter, House Speaker "Tip" O'Neill and other members of the congressional leadership attest to her high standing in the top levels of government.

Unique among her peers, Mrs. Chisholm has not allowed fame and status to deflect her basic commitment to the poor, the disadvantaged and the downtrodden in American society.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924, Shirley Chisholm was a "stand out" of a child, reading and writing by the time she was three years old. Her talents and abilities were encouraged by her parents and teachers. Mrs. Chisholm credits her early achievements to a stable family life -- strict in discipline -- and an educational milieu where excellence was demanded.

Mrs. Chisholm's strong belief in the necessity of education, both basic and continuing, is reflected in her own career: she holds three degrees in education and has received fifteen honorary doctorates from schools across the nation. A former New York City nursery school teacher, she has served as director of a child care center and was an educational consultant to the New York City Division of Day Care.

By mid-1960's, however, events turned and thrust Shirley Chisholm into the spotlight. The people of Brooklyn -- community leaders, politicians and, most of all, parents -- sought leadership for their district. In 1964, Shirley Chisholm was elected to the New York State Assembly where she served until 1968, when a new challenge was enjoined.

Congress did not know Shirley Chisholm in 1969. But when she entered the House of Representatives -- after walloping an opponent in the November 1968 general election -- the chamber would never be the same. She became the first woman of her race to be elected to the nation's legislative body and has served in Congress ever since, steadily increasing her standing.

In 1972, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm took another step and ran for President: the first Black woman to seek the nation's highest office. Though she lost, her name, her ideals, and her commitment became imbedded in America's consciousness.

Today, held high in esteem by her colleagues and dear to the hearts of her constituents, she remains, unthought and unbosomed, "Fighting Shirley Chisholm."

She is the author of two books, "Unthought and Unbosomed," her autobiography; and "The Good Fight," the story of her 1972 bid for the Presidency.